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*Presented to the Royal College of Surgeons  
(with Portrait)*

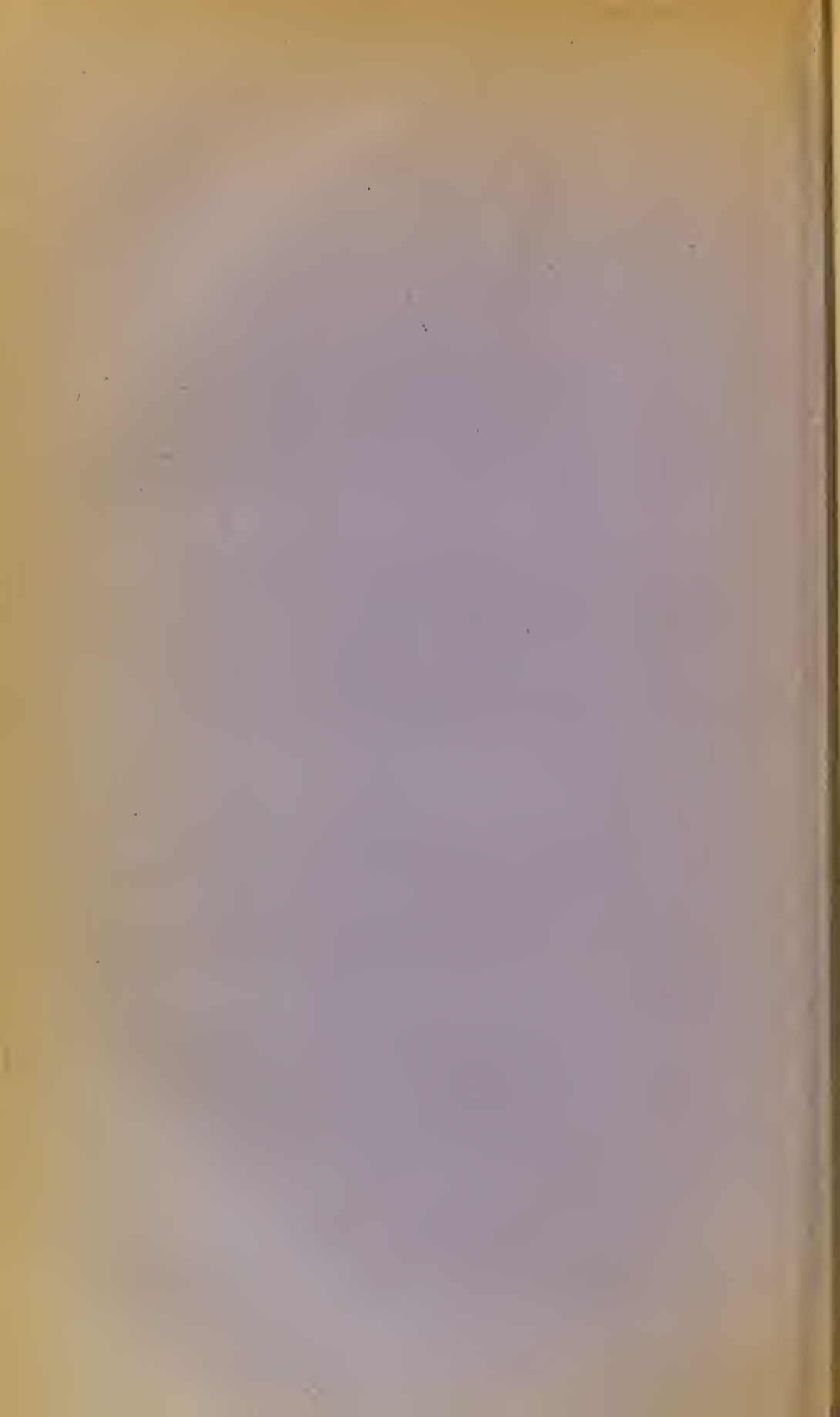
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1885

ROBERT DRUITT,

M.D., F.R.C.P., F.R.C.S.

1814—1883.





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FOR the thirty years preceding the year 1870, Dr. Druit, of Mayfair, who died on the 15th inst. at his residence in Strathmore-gardens, Kensington, in the sixty-ninth year of his age, was one of the most active and best and most widely known of metropolitan medical practitioners; but in 1867 he was obliged by ill-health to begin to give up public professional work, and in 1872 increasing physical weakness obliged him to retire from all active work; and to men who have since then entered the profession he has been solely, or almost solely, known, as the author of the ever-popular "Surgeon's Vade-Mecum." It is no slight distinction to have been the author of a manual of such sterling and lasting value, but to have written it, is only one of the many ways in which Dr. Druit rendered marked service to the profession and the public.

Robert Druit, who was born in December, 1814, was descended from a family, members of which, from father to son, had practised medicine in Wimborne, Dorset, for more than a century; and on his mother's side he was connected with the family to which the late Mr. Charles Mayo, of Winchester, Dr. Charles Mayo, and Mr. Herbert Mayo all belonged. It was natural, therefore, that Robert Druit, though he lost his father, who was a surgeon, when he himself was only seven years old, should have chosen the

practice of medicine for his life-career. He was educated at the old Grammar School of Wimborne, and was made a sound classical scholar. This part of his general education he never allowed to rust; to the last days of his life he read easily and fluently any classic, and it was to him a constant delight and recreation to keep up his acquaintance with Horace in particular. At the age of sixteen, in accordance with the custom in those days, his medical education and instruction commenced by his being received as a pupil by Mr. Charles Mayo, one of the Surgeons of the Winchester Hospital, and there he enjoyed, under exceptionally favourable conditions, all the advantages of the old apprenticeship system of training youths for the profession of medicine. In 1834 he came to London and entered as a medical student at King's College and at the Middlesex Hospital. King's College Hospital had not then been established, and as Mr. Herbert Mayo and Sir Thomas (then Dr.) Watson, who held professorships in the Medical Faculty of King's College, were on the staff of the Middlesex Hospital, Robert Druitt went to that institution for his medical and surgical practice. In 1836 he took the Licence of the Society of Apothecaries of London, and in the following year became a Member of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, and settled in practice in Bruton-street, Berkeley-square. He then began at once to work at the book which has kept his name fresh and green in the minds of medical students and practitioners in every part of the world, and still makes it familiar to fresh generations of students as they pass from our medical schools into practice. Before speaking of this work—"The Surgeon's Vade-Mecum"—more fully, however, it will be well to notice that Dr. Druitt, who was all his life an ardent student, was not long content with his position in Bruton-street or with the qualifications he had obtained. He looked to the higher medical title, and to a higher standing in the profession. In 1845 he became a Fellow, by examination, of the Royal College of Surgeons; and in 1852 a Licentiate of the Royal College of Physicians of London. At that

date the College of Physicians had no direct connexion with the main body of the profession, and had not undertaken to examine and qualify men who intended to be general practitioners, and the Licentiates held in the College the rank now held by the Members. In 1859, when the new order of Licentiates was created, the old Licentiates were offered the then new title of Member; and from the grade of Member, Dr. Druitt was, in 1874, elected to the Fellowship of the College. He thus won the highest qualification obtainable from each of the greatest English medical corporations, and late in life he received the Lambeth degree of Doctor of Medicine. In 1845, Dr. Druitt had moved into Curzon-street, Mayfair; and in 1852 he went to Paris, and studied for a while under Pajot, and afterwards was engaged chiefly in family and obstetric practice of a good class, which steadily increased in extent and value. In 1858 he moved to Hertford-street, where he remained till ill-health compelled him to retire from all active professional work. The first edition of "The Surgeon's Vade-Mecum" appeared in 1839, and the merits of the book were so quickly and heartily appreciated that a second edition had to be brought out in June, 1841. The work is now in its eleventh edition, and the demand for it is still constant and large. The success of the work has indeed been very remarkable: nearly 40,000 copies of it have been sold; it has been reprinted in America, and translated into several foreign languages. And it thoroughly well deserved to command such striking success. In the preface to the second edition, a copy of which is before us, the author says: "The work is meant to afford a short but complete account of modern surgery; to contain everything that is essential to the right understanding of its principles, and to embody the experience of the highest authorities as to the best rules of practice." A task of no mean difficulty that, for even an eminent surgeon, and one to daunt the ambition of most young men; but Druitt understood clearly and well what was wanted, and the result more than justified his belief that he could do it. The work is an admirable



model of what a "manual" should be, but so rarely is. Each successive edition of it underwent the most careful and complete revision, and reflected well the incessant advance in the science and art of surgery; and we need not point out how immense that advance has been in the last forty years. Dr. Druitt was a master of the English language, and his style of writing is elegant, simple, and clear, and remarkably free from technicalities of expression; and these characters marked all his writings. He himself said he thought the secret of the success that attended his work lay in the fact that he had tried to write so that all could understand, had written in plain English, had said what he meant, and meant what he said. To this we would add that he wrote with fulness of accurate knowledge and clear and orderly thought. All these excellences are markedly present in the article on "Inflammation," which he contributed to "Cooper's Dictionary of Practical Surgery and Encyclopædia of Surgical Science" (1872). The intention of the essay was to bring the history of the doctrines respecting inflammation down to the latest date; to expound the doctrines of all schools, while condemning none; to trace the history of the treatment of inflammation, especially the rise and fall of blood-letting; and to show the influence of current modes of thought or of received doctrines on the measures adopted to subdue the malady. A task of immense difficulty; but, as has been well said, Dr. Druitt brought to it "rare scholarship, a well-exercised judicial faculty, and a comprehensiveness of grasp rarely equalled"; and the result was a masterpiece of clearness, fairness, and learning. This and the "Vade-Mecum" were the two greatest of Dr. Druitt's professional works, and we must be content to notice very briefly his many other writings. These—pamphlets, addresses, and contributions to journals—were very numerous, and dealt with a great variety of subjects, medical, sanitary, and popular. Among the directly medical of these writings we may mention a "Case of Puerperal Fever, with Diphtheria; Life saved by Sesquichloride of Iron," contributed to

*Obstetrical Transactions*, vol. iii.; "On Degeneration of the Placenta at the End of Pregnancy," *Medico-Chirurgical Transactions*, vol. xxxvi.; an account of his "Visit to Amiens during the Cholera Epidemic," *Medical Times and Gazette*, vol. ii. 1866; "On the Use of Raw Meat in Diarrhœa and other Diseased Conditions," *ibid.*, vol. ii. 1870; "On the Varieties of Imperfect Speech in Brain Disease," *ibid.*, vol. i. 1871, and "On Two Cases of Intermittent Hæmatinuria," *ibid.*, vol. i. 1873.

In 1873 and 1874, Dr. Druitt contributed to our pages many "Letters from Madras" on subjects that he observed and studied during his residence for health's sake in that city: among these were "Notes on Madras as a Winter Residence"; "Opium Smoking, etc.—Opium v. Grog"; on "Leprosy," and "Nerve Influence in Leprosy"; "Dysentery and Ipecacuanha"; "Varicosity of Lymphatics, Chyluria, etc."; "Abscess of the Liver"; "The Medical Institutions of Madras"; "On Burning of the Dead"; "Different Races, and their Modes of Burial"; "On Dancing Girls"; "Prostitution, and Contagious Diseases Acts"; on "The Native Practitioners, Vydians and Hakims"; and some other subjects. He was an earnest and prominent student and teacher of sanitary science, and in 1856 was elected one of the Medical Officers of Health to St. George's, Hanover-square, the duties of which important post he discharged with all the industry and fulness that he brought to every office he undertook. This appointment he resigned in 1867. During this time he read a paper at the Royal Institute of British Architects on "The Construction and Management of Human Habitations, considered in relation to the Public Health" (*Transactions of the Royal Institute of British Architects*, 1859-60). In 1864 he was elected President of the Metropolitan Association of Medical Officers of Health, and filled that office until July, 1872, when the Association reluctantly accepted his retirement on the ground of ill-health. During the eight years that he presided over the Society he delivered several valuable and instructive addresses, on "The Influence of Customs, Habits, and Morals on the Health of the Com-

munity"; "The Natural History of Intemperance"; "The Position and Duties of Medical Officers of Health"; and on other kindred topics. He had given much careful thought to the subject of intemperance, and, in addition to the address mentioned above, he published, in our pages in 1862, two very instructive papers on "Intemperance and its Prevention." He held and taught that "total abstinence" might be, and doubtless often was, a useful and necessary discipline for desperate and confirmed drunkards—for dipsomaniacs—but that it was wrong, scientifically and morally, to reject wine, etc., as being *alcoholic*, and *therefore* wicked and an evil; and he would show the fallacy of the total abstinence orators who prate about people drinking "that deadly poison alcohol," by pointing out that people never do take alcohol in its poisonous form, *i.e.*, as anhydrous alcohol; and that you might just as well talk of people eating phosphorus when dining on fish. Holding the views he did on the subject, he set himself the task of finding forms of alcoholic food which should meet and satisfy the just and reasonable appetite. The result was the series of charming reports on "The Cheap Wines from France, Germany, Italy, Hungary, etc., their Use in Diet and Medicine," which appeared first in our pages in 1864-65, and a much enlarged edition of which was published by Renshaw in 1873. The work contains a very large amount of information—the outcome of practical study and experience—of importance and value to the public, to physicians, and to patients; and has helped largely to make more widely known the excellent qualities of the light and pure wines, and to lead to their displacing the stronger and fortified wines. As regards Dr. Druitt's professional and public life, we only add further that in 1847 he was appointed one of the examiners of the Society of Apothecaries; that he filled the office of Vice-President of the Obstetrical Society; and that for ten years (1862-72), in addition to all his other labours, he was the able, efficient, and courteous editor of this journal.

We will not attempt to describe the man more particularly than to say that he was of good height, and



well proportioned; he had a powerful head, his countenance was intellectual and refined, and his manner most courteous. And those who had the good fortune to know him intimately, and see him in his happy, cultured, and artistic domestic circle, were well aware that his professional and public duties did not by any means absorb his energies or satisfy his tastes. His intellect was eminently many-sided, and his tastes led him to study a wide range of subjects. He was an accomplished botanist, had an excellent knowledge of chemistry, both organic and inorganic, and was a good geologist. He was also a great student of languages, and of the manners and customs of men, taking special delight and interest in the study of these if they threw any light upon the Bible. His knowledge of the Scriptures was remarkably deep and large, and we have the assurance of clergymen that he was a theologian of unusual learning and force. He had a thorough knowledge of the art of music, and church music was one of his most cherished studies and delights. Some of our readers are probably acquainted with his pamphlet, "Conversations on the Choral Service," a charming discussion on church music, which appeared first in a periodical called *The Parish Choir*, the letterpress of which he edited, and to which he contributed many papers, beginning with the introductory article in the first volume, and ending with the preface to the third volume. He was transparently straightforward and true, but he was not a man whom it was easy to know well. He certainly did not "wear his heart upon his sleeve," but was extremely reserved as to his own acquirements, his cherished tastes, and his inner life; but those really in earnest in seeking for instruction or advice, ever found him an attentive and sympathetic listener, and a clear, sagacious and wise, counsellor and critic.

We will not describe here the illness which, beginning from a severe chill in 1866, when he was suffering from overwork, forced him to retire from all public and active professional work in 1872, and progressed, with unequal steps, but always downwards, till the end came on the

15th of this month. The history of the disease—intermittent hæmaturia—for the first six years of its duration is graphically and minutely depicted by himself in our pages (vol. i. 1873), and there is nothing really new to be added to it. It is not easy to imagine what a severe and terrible trial it was to such a man to be physically disabled from all his previous occupations while his intellect was as clear, and his interest in science and art as keen, as ever; but the trial was borne with humble resignation and touching patience, for he was not merely a great theologian, but also a devout Christian, and ruled his life by his religious faith.

When he was thus laid aside, those who best knew and could appreciate his life-work determined to give themselves the satisfaction of presenting him with some token of sympathy and friendship, and 107 of the leading members of the profession constituted themselves a general committee for the purpose. Their wish was largely shared by the profession, and the result was the presentation to Dr. Druitt of a cheque for £1215 in a silver cup, given by "370 professional and other friends in evidence of their sympathy with him in a prolonged illness, induced by years of generous and unwearied labours in the cause of humanity, and as a proof of their appreciation of the services rendered by him as an author and sanitary reformer to both the public and the profession."

Dr. Druitt married, in the beginning of 1845, the second daughter of William Hopkinson, Esq., of Hamilton-place, Euston-road, and has left a widow, four daughters, and three sons, the youngest of whom follows his father's profession.

W. C.

May 26, 1883.